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## THE VEDANTIC APPROACH TO REALITY.

PHILOSOPHY is the attempt to think out the pre-suppositions of experience, to grasp, by means of reason, life or reality as a whole. It seeks to discover a rational explanation for the universe—an explanation which gives to all parts, nature, God and man, their due, views all things in their right proportion and resolves the contradictions of experience. The search for such a solution is the problem of philosophy. The answer should be something in which reason can finally rest. Philosophy has to find out an all-comprehensive and universal concept which itself requires no explanation, while it explains everything else. It must be the ultimate reality into which all else can be resolved and which cannot itself be resolved into anything else. Philosophy is the theory of reality if by reality we mean something that exists of itself and in its own right and not merely as a modification of something else. The test of a philosophical theory is, then, its capacity to coordinate the wealth of apparently disconnected phenomena into an ordered whole, to comprehend and synthesize all aspects of life, reality or experience; for is not the philosopher the spectator of all time and all existence?

Attempts to solve the problem of philosophy generally start from inadequate conceptions which lead us on to more adequate ones through their own inner logic. We start with some part of the whole, some conception which accounts for a portion of our experience, and soon mistake it for the whole or the final explanation of things. We are surprised with contradictions and inconsistencies, which

condemn the theory as an inadequate solution of the riddle of the universe. The mechanical principles of the physical sciences are of great use and value in the region of inanimate nature, but so soon as we apply them to other fields of reality, say animal life, they confess themselves to be bankrupt. Their poverty becomes patent and we, on the basis of these notions and their inadequacies, progress to more concrete and definite theories. Philosophy passes in review the different conceptions which claim to represent the universe, and tests their varying fulness and worth. Philosophy, in this sense, is a criticism of categories. We start with a lower category, criticize it, discard it as incomplete and progress to a higher one where the lower receives its fulfilment. Philosophy, then, is a progressive discovery of reality or defining of reality in terms of fundamental conceptions or categories, or a gradual passage from lower, more abstract and indefinite conceptions, to higher, more concrete and definite ones.

The Vedanta thinkers sometimes approach the problem of philosophy from this standpoint. If we turn to Chapter III of the Taittiriya Upanishad we see there a progressive revelation of the true nature of reality to the seeking mind. The absolute is identified first with one thing, then with another, until we reach a solution which stifles all doubt and satisfies all inquiry by its freedom from discord and contradiction. We here propose to sketch in modern terms the picture of the world as it appeared to those ancient seekers after truth.

The discussion about the nature of reality is in the form of a dialogue between father, Varuna, and son, Bhrigu. The son approaches the father, entreating him to teach him the nature of reality. The father mentions the general characters or the formal aspects of the Absolute known in the Vedanta philosophy as *Brahmam*. It must be something which includes everything else. It is that by which the

whole universe is sustained. "That from whence these beings are born, that by which when born they live, that into which they enter at their death; try to know that. This is *Brahmam*" (Taittiriya Upanishad, Chap. III, 1). The ultimate reality is that in which we live, move and have our being. It is the whole or the totality. "It includes all the world"; naught exists outside it; "there is nothing else beside it"; it is the *res completa*, that which is complete in itself, determined by itself and capable of being explained entirely from itself. Thus the father describes to the son the general features of reality. He gives him the empty formula and asks him to discover by reflection the content of it. The son proceeds to identify it with one thing after another.

The most immediate datum which may be regarded as *given*, and which strikes our mind at first thought, is the world of relatively unorganized matter. One who does not care to strain his thought to go deeper than surface appearances will be struck with the universality and omnipotence of the material forces. Matter is the basis of life. It is the stuff of which the world is made. So the son pitches upon *Anham*<sup>1</sup> (food, matter) as the content possessing the characteristics of the Absolute already set forth. "He perceived that *Anham* is *Brahmam*; for from *Anham* these beings are produced; by *Anham* when born they live; and into *Anham* they enter at their death" (Taittiriya Upanishad, III, 2).

It is the nature of any partial or abstract theory to transcend itself and thus manifest its inadequacy. Matter, though it accounts for a part of experience, cannot be the final explanation of things. Thought can never rest in it. While materialism is a sufficient explanation of the inanimate portion of reality, it does not account for the living

<sup>1</sup> *Anham* is used as equivalent to "matter." See the Vedanta Sstras, II, Adhyaya, III, Pada 1, Sstras 12 and 13. Vidyaranya, referring to a Chandogya passage, says: "Here by *Anham* is meant Earth" or matter.

and conscious aspects of it. If adopted in human affairs it becomes a thoroughly inadequate and false guide. The materialists' picture of the world disregards the specifically human elements of life. The *whole* of experience cannot be identified with this *part* of matter. Our thought rebels against treating parts as wholes. So Bhrigu is convinced that materialism does not effect the unification of reality needed for the Absolute and is therefore not more than a temporary resting place for thought. Dissatisfied with his discovery that matter is the Absolute, he approaches his father for help, and the father asks him to think further. "Desire to know *Brahmam* by reflection" (or deep thought) (Taittiriya Upanishad, III, 2). *Paryalochanam* (reflection) is what the father advises.

The son adopts the advice. Further reflection reveals to him the precise inadequacy of the materialist's theory. In organized matter, the plant world, we come across something to which "matter," though it is the indispensable basis and aid, is not the complete explanation. So this theory of "Matter is *Brahmam*" leaves aside a good deal of the world of existence, while a true theory should cover the whole range of actuality or existence. Mechanical formulas do not account for the life-phenomena. The ultimate reality should be, not matter but something akin to *Prana* (life). "He perceived that *Prana* is *Brahmam*, for from *Prana* these things are born; by *Prana* when born they live; into *Prana* they enter at their death" (Taittiriya Upanishad, III, 3). From this it should not be inferred that the Vedanta philosophy supports a theory of vitalism. That life cannot be completely accounted for on physico-chemical principles is the element of truth exaggerated in theories of vitalism. According to the Vedanta philosophy it is not correct to speak of a sudden revelation of spirit when we come to life, for even matter is spirit, though in its lowest mode of manifestation. It rejects both mechan-

ism and vitalism. We cannot make life mechanical. The world of mechanism is not the same as the world of life. The two are distinct, but the discontinuity between matter and life is not so great as to justify vitalism. The world of mechanism is the medium in which alone life has its being. Though life is not mechanism, still life dwells in it. You find also a tendency to make all mechanism alive. To make life mechanical or mechanism alive is to dissolve the differences in an abstract identity. It would be to sacrifice wealth of content and speciality of service for the sake of symmetry and simplicity. To make mechanism alive would be to deprive matter of its specific function in the universe. Dead mechanism has its own purpose to fulfil, its contribution to make to this wondrous whole. It is therefore not right to reduce unity to identity. We must recognize the difference between the two as much as their unity. The world of matter exists for the purpose of responding to the needs of life. The name *Anham* (food) is advisedly given by the Vedanta philosophers to the principle of matter. Matter exists for the purpose of being *used up* by life. It serves as food for living beings. It is not an alien element, but is something which can be "eaten," controlled and utilized. It is the food which enters into the organic life, the material which the organism uses to build up its body. The authors of the Upanishads make it clear to us that environment, with its necessity, is not a recalcitrant force, not some dark fate over against which we have to knock our heads in despair, but rather the servant of the organism, the helpmate of life and consciousness enabling the growth and perfection of higher beings. In short, life and matter, organism and environment are members existing for each other in a larger whole. They are unintelligible when viewed in separation. "Matter is rooted in life and life in matter" (Taittiriya Upanishad, II, 3). The science of physics, which seeks to divorce matter from life and study

matter in its isolation, studies an abstraction, however useful it may be. The ideal of physical science is an explanation of life in terms of mechanism. Anything which comes in the way of this mechanical ideal is quite unwelcome to physics. Again, if the science of biology concerned itself with life to the exclusion of matter, it would be a science of dead abstractions. What we need is biophysics and physcobiology; they only would do justice to the different aspects and their essential unity. The whole must be seen as a whole if it is to be seen at all. We see then the exact relation of life and matter. The same whole of reality manifests itself first as matter, then as life. The two are but lower and higher expressions of the deeper reality. They are but movements in one grand scheme. Life, being a higher stage than matter, is the completer truth. Life is the promise and potency of matter. Life is the soul and spirit of matter. The Upanishad says of matter that “this *Prana* (life) produced in the body is the soul.” So life includes and transcends matter. It is a higher concrete than matter. Matter is a fragmentary abstraction from the point of view of life. The mere externality of matter is transcended and overcome. The parts are no more external to each other but they are elements in an organic whole with a definite end. In the living body the elements cooperate in the preservation of the organism. But even in the living body there is an element of externality which will disappear as we proceed to the next higher category of *Manas* (mind) or consciousness.

The whole world of reality refuses to be squeezed into the category of life. Though *Prana* or life is nearer to reality than matter or mechanism, still it cannot account for the whole of our experience. Life, for instance, cannot account for consciousness. The category of life, failing to embrace the whole of reality, confesses itself to be but a partial truth covering only a limited field of experience.

It cannot therefore be put forward as the ultimate essence or principle of the whole world of reality. Once again the son approaches the father. The father asks him to think to the bitter end without stopping at halfway houses. He pursues his reflection and discovers that the higher forms of life require us to introduce another category to describe their relations. The new factor of consciousness makes its appearance as life develops. *Manas* or perceptual consciousness is the sole reality. "He perceived that *Manas* is *Brahmam*, for from *Manas* these beings are born; by *Manas* when born they live; into *Manas* they enter at their death" (III, 4). Here by *Manas* is meant perceptual consciousness which delights in sense objects and is moved by instincts and impulses.

The relation of mind to life is exactly of the same kind as the relation of life to matter. "Mind is the soul of *Prana* or life." Mind is not a by-product of body or life but is the central core of life. The two are different expressions of the one spiritual essence, lower and higher stages of a single all-embracing life. The relation of mind to life is that of a higher to a lower aspect of the spirit. It is puerile to minimize the distinction between the two by materializing mind or spiritualizing matter and life. While recognizing the distinction we should not lose our grip on the essential unity which underlies the distinction. The two contribute in their own distinct ways to the same individual whole. The two are so fashioned and constructed as to develop and promote a complete identity. They are aspects of the ultimate spirit, through the interaction of which the whole realizes itself. The science of biology, which studies life, neglecting the fruit and essence of life, mind, studies an abstraction. Psychology, if it divorces mind from life and studies mind as an isolated phenomenon, apart from its setting of life and the organism, lays itself open to the fallacy of the abstract.



It studies not human minds but disembodied ghosts. It is "phantomology" and not psychology. It is a good sign that psychology at the present day views its subject-matter from the biological point of view. Psychology studies not merely the *psyche* but the psychophysical organism. The conscious organism can be seen as a whole only by biopsychology or psychobiology. Only then shall we know mind in its origin and working.

The concept of *Manas* (mind) is higher than life or matter. It is the richer, fuller and more inclusive concept. But the searching intellect is not satisfied with its adequacy, for the perceptual consciousness does not exhaust the nature of reality. No doubt it accounts for the animal mind. Animals have only a perceptual consciousness, their mental horizon being restricted to mere perceptions of the present moment. The animal lives only in the present. It is devoid of the power of synthesis and therefore of self-consciousness. But the human consciousness is capable of rising above itself, of comparing itself with other selves and of passing judgment on its own character. The man judges while the animal only senses. He is a being of "wise discourse looking before and after." He is able to transcend the animal limitations, break down the despotism of the senses and lift himself above himself. While the animal leads a life of mere feeling and impulse, the self-conscious individual regulates his life in conformity with ideals of beauty, goodness and truth. It is the capacity to distinguish fact from idea which makes possible art, morality and science. So a higher category than animal mind or perceptual consciousness is felt to be needed. He approaches his father and is advised by him to think to the root of the matter. The son realizes, on reflection, that the specific quality of man which makes him the lord of creation is his *intellectuality*. By his intellect or understanding he seeks the true, attempts the good and loves the beautiful.

By it he connects sensations, compares and contrasts them with one another and derives inferences. It gives the power of synthesis. To it is due the self-consciousness of man. So the seeker after truth hits upon *Vignana* or understanding. "He perceived that *Vignana* (intellect) was *Brahmam*, for from *Vignana* these beings are born; by *Vignana* when born they live; into *Vignana* they enter at their death" (III, 5).

What is the relation of *Vignana* to *Manas*, or understanding to perception? This is the familiar question of modern epistemology, the relation of the universal to the particular, concept to percept, thought to sense. Understanding is related to perception as perception to life, or as life to matter. *Vignana* is a higher form of the lower *Manas*. It is the soul of *Manas* or its essential reality. "*Vignana* is the soul (or spirit) of *Manas*" (II, 4). Nothing is gained by divorcing intellect from sense. Such a divorce leads to abstract explanations of reality. Sense is the condition of thought. Thought does not produce or create a new order of existence. The sense world is not a mere chaos of particulars into which thought introduces, later and from outside, order and system. Thought only discovers or explicates the order which already prevails in the world of facts. The ideals of the world reveal themselves to thought. We seek order *of* facts. As in science we try to interpret the order prevalent in the actual and discriminate it from our errors and prejudices, so in morality we try to see the goodness of things and discriminate the good from the bad. We are not creating a new moral world by our action. The tendency to neglect the perceptual basis is the besetting temptation of the intellectualist temper. Rationalist theories which sacrifice the particular to exalt the universal reduce the universe, in the vivid phrase of Bradley, to an "unearthly ballet of bloodless categories." We get a philosophy of arid concepts having nothing to do

with the glowing experiences of life. Truth becomes a dead conformity to certain logical conceptions and ideas with no promptings from life. In art technique gets the mastery over temperament. Art expresses the critical and not the creative attitude of life. Morality becomes the drill-sergeant type, insisting on nothing more than a blind unthinking obedience to the commands delivered. Rationalism thus murders reality to dissect it. We find a mechanical perfection in place of spiritual beauty, logic in place of life. Organization is the ideal, but the process of starving the real leaves no material to organize. Philosophy becomes arid and abstract, art mechanical and soulless, and ethics formal and dead. The dire consequences resulting from the adoption of this theory in practical affairs of the world, we see to-day on the fields of Europe. We find also systems of philosophy which protest against this deification of intellect. But in their righteous revolt against the abuse of logic they are led to the opposite extreme of advocating inordinately the claims of immediate experience. Bergson and James are representatives of this new tendency in philosophy, which goes by the name of intuitionism or radical empiricism. This tendency to exclude logic from life is as vicious as the other tendency to exclude life from logic. The abstract and one-sided nature of mere empiricism is reflected in the world of philosophy, art and morality. Under its influence the superficial aspects of things are noted and the underlying principles neglected. Naturalistic explanations become dominant in philosophy. Art is sensualistic and ethics economic or utilitarian in the lowest sense of the term. Mere percept and mere concept are both good for nothing. Both are abstracts reified. Kant spoke a great truth which the world cannot afford to forget when he said that "percepts without concepts are blind; concepts without percepts are empty." This essential unity of these two distinct factors the Vedanta thinkers recognize.

The self-conscious individual in whom *Vignana* functions at its best becomes the highest expression of reality if there is nothing higher than intellect. But self-consciousness which is the product of intellect presupposes self-distinction. At the intellectual level the self conscious of itself is self exclusive of others, one among many. The self not only distinguishes itself from others but excludes others from its nature. A "pluralistic universe" will be the last word of philosophy, but the thinking mind recognizes certain difficulties in the way of accepting this solution as final. The natural outcome of such an intellectualist pluralism will be a narrow philistine spirit of individualism, sensualism and selfishness. The individuals enter into rivalry with one another for the satisfaction of their appetites and ambitions. Such a view will develop a sort of morbid ease and self-satisfaction with the actual and thus curb all efforts for the improvement of mankind. It would make it impossible for the finite mind to transcend its finiteness. It gives man no ideal of the solidarity of the universe to which he has to work himself up. The human consciousness which in some moments of exaltation feels itself to be at one with the whole universe, baffles this intellectual analysis. Those aspects of experience known as religious are not accounted for by the pluralist scheme. The factor of ever aspiring, ever striving for something higher which man has not but hopes to have, is not satisfactorily explained. Man recognizes his incompleteness and imperfection and seeks for something above himself, an ideal, an infinite. If the individual's highest aim is merely to secure an independent status for himself he becomes divorced from his real, i. e., his divine self. It is impossible for man, a child of eternity, to distinguish himself from God in the long run. He cannot fix any boundary to his real self. If he seeks for the private self-satisfaction he seeks the finite as if it were the infinite. It is the self-contradiction of a

being who knows not what he really is and seeks his good where it can never be found. If the world is a number of distinct isolated units, then peace and harmony are *a priori* impossible. Pluralism by itself cannot give any satisfactory account of the unity of the world of spirits. Most of the modern pluralistic systems recognize this difficulty. Professor Ward says: "That a plurality of individuals in isolation should ever come into relation is inconceivable indeed, but only because a plurality without unity is itself inconceivable" (*Realm of Ends*).

There is no doubt that human self-consciousness represents, though not the highest, yet a very high manifestation of reality. Sankara gives the following statement: "The *Atman* is expanded only in man. He is most endowed with intelligence. He speaks what is known, he sees what is known. He knows what is to come, he sees the visible and the invisible worlds. He desires to obtain immortality by appropriate means. Thus endowed is man." He has ideals of knowledge, beauty and goodness but he does not as a finite consciousness realize his aspirations. He only struggles toward union, peace and harmony. Though he ever strives toward union with the whole or the divine, he never grasps it on account of his finiteness and impotence. Finite souls never realize, though they ever strain after, that pure bliss and self-forgetful realization which in Vedantic phraseology is called *Ananda*. The sciences belonging to the intellectual level are sciences of struggle and endeavor and not sciences of fruition or fulness of attainment. They are sciences of approach to reality. Logic with its impulse toward totality *demand*s a complete and consistent world; love *struggles* for union with the whole, and life *attempts* to realize the all-perfect in conduct. In all these regions of mind we catch glimpses of the real but do not have the full vision with its joy unspeakable and the peace that passeth all understanding. We have *demand*s,

*struggles* and *attempts*. We are in the *striving stage*. We are only on the road with a dim vision of the end; the fulfilment is still a distant scene. The full splendor is not yet. So human self-consciousness is incomplete and imperfect. It is only a grade of reality to be transcended in something higher but not the whole of reality. On the other hand, if intellect should be the highest phase of reality, then morality, law and justice become the ultimate terms and struggle the end of existence. What a poor imperfect thing man will be if he has no prospect of realizing his ideals! His effort to become something greater, holier and higher than his own finiteness will be unsuccessful. The world will be cut into two as with a hatchet, self and not-self. If we do not embrace them in a final higher unity, then his spiritual endeavors are foredoomed to failure. Pessimism is our only refuge and prayer all our business. Man presses on toward a higher life, but cruel fate crushes the human soul. He desires to throw off his brutish heritage and reach heaven. But the blind forces of nature which go on their relentless way caring naught for the human victims, dash him down to the bottomless void. The intellect with its vision confined to outward appearances, is struck with "nature red in tooth and claw." Such an outward vision gives the impression that we are caught in the wheels of a soulless engine which has neither the eyes to see our agony nor the heart to feel for us. We are the victims of a merciless fate, trapped in the grip of destruction. Intellectualistic despair is the mental attitude of those who break the real into self and not-self and make the universe a tug of war between the two. Matthew Arnold's insistent note of sadness is due to his theory of opposition of self and not-self.

"No, we are strangers here, the world is from of old. To tunes we did not call, our being must keep chime." The system of nature does not sympathize with the bliss for

which we sigh. Our boundless hopes are shattered to dust and our tenderest ideals mocked by the stern indifference of nature. The microcosm is pitted against the macrocosm and to all outward appearances the external world seems to be the more potent force. What can man do in this plight except withdraw from the world and obtain inner freedom by renunciation and contemplation? "By the Tiber as by the Ganges, ethical man admits that the cosmos is too strong for him, and, destroying every bond which ties him to it by ascetic discipline, he seeks salvation in absolute renunciation" (Huxley, *Romanes Lecture*, p. 29). The Sankhya philosophy of ancient India starts with a dualism of *Purusha* (self) and *Prakriti* (not-self). They are the two eternal uncreated substances differing essentially from each other. Deliverance is to be obtained by realizing the separateness of the two and dissolving the bond between them. Man to gain his freedom has to cut himself off from the ties that bind him to nature. We are exhorted by Mr. Russell in his admirable essay on the Freeman's worship to cherish, adore and love the ideals where the mind is at home, caring naught for the universe. He builds an ethics of renunciation on this "firm foundation of despair." "To abandon the struggle for private happiness, to expel all eagerness of temporary desire, to burn with passion for eternal things, this is renunciation and this is the Freeman's worship." We are engaged in an unequal struggle between man and nature, self and not-self. A mere contemplation of it would produce a stoic calm combined with a stern pathos.<sup>2</sup> Militant heroism we may adopt if we care

<sup>2</sup> "Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood;  
 Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore;  
 Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest;  
 Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;  
 Man would be mild and with safe conscience blest;  
 Man must begin, know this, where nature ends;  
 Nature and man can never be fast friends.  
 Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave."—M. Arnold.

How pathetic is this expression of despair, born of an intellectual vision which disdains to dive beneath appearances (Cf. Russell, *Philos. Essays*).

for the martyr's crown. Even martyrs die with the complaint, O God, why hast thou forsaken me? The destiny of man seems to be struggle, unrest, and baffled hope. This pessimistic conclusion is the essential theme of the Buddhists. They say there is nothing else than this world process or *Samsara*. There is neither a changeless God responsible for it nor a suffering deity struggling against the attacks of Satan. Buddhism considers the appearance of opposition to be final and exhorts man to get out of this whirlpool by sinking his selfhood. But this is too harsh a conclusion to be accepted by all. So a supreme soul or *Iswara* soon appears to help the individual in his warfare against the not-self. So God along with man battles with the prince of darkness. The atheism of the Sankhya system gives place to the theism of the Yoga philosophy. We have then the individual self, God and nature; the individual *self*, according to Saiva Siddhanta, *Vaishnavism* and Christianity, has to extricate himself from the fetters of *Nature* by the grace of *God*. The Highest in all these theistic systems is looked upon as a personal godhead,—a father, creator or providence, accessible to prayer and propitiation, ever loving man and granting his requests. By the help of God it is possible for man to escape out of this drift of the world called *Samsara*. If we think in the acquired dialect of the intellect we will not be able to reach the highest which includes all other things. We will get a pluralistic universe presided over by a God whose position therein is ambiguous. If we say God is over against a number of spirits and that the Absolute is a republic of spirits including God, we ask, what is the position of God in the republic? If he is one among the many he is reduced to the level of the finite beings. If man himself is part of God we shirk the whole problem by raising man to the level of the infinite. Pluralism is displaced by an abstract monism. But the pluralists' God is not the perfection



transcending both good and evil, not the absolute which absorbs them both, but only a force within it fighting with another. Such a God can only be an aspect of reality and not the whole of it. Besides, this conception of God opposed to the world naturally culminates in deism. God is transcendent to the world because the world is evil and he is good. He has nothing which nature has and can only be defined negatively. So a severe logician of the type of Sankara who thinks to the very foundations, with his intellectualist bias, reduces the universe to an opposition of self and not-self, God and the world, the infinite and the finite. Certainly both cannot be real, for the two are exclusive of each other. The finite world is dismissed as illusory and the absolute posited as real. For if we argue about the problem of the origin of the world and man's place in it, we will be drowned in a sea of contradictions. Kant, and after him Bradley, have shown the difficulty of reconciling the antinomies with which our understanding confronts us. The self-contradictory cannot be real. Therefore the finite world is illusory and the Absolute is real, for it is pure affirmation. But the Absolute which repels the relative cannot be anything more than an undifferentenced unity which is the negation of the finite and the determinate. The Absolute is related if we can talk of relation in this sense, only negatively to the world. The Absolute thus collapses into a self-identity, negatively related to the particulars, a featureless unity leaving aside all differences. To this absolute none of the attributes of finite being belongs. If we attach any predicate to it we will bring it down to the level of the finite. It is not anything which the finite world is. If the finite world is many it is one; if it is complex it is simple; if it is varying it is constant; if it is temporal it is eternal. Strip off everything finite and what remains is the infinite or God. Everything positive is excluded from the real, mind and matter in-

cluded. Escape from finite life is the goal of humanity. Such are the views of Sankara and the neo-Platonists. The fatal criticism against all such abstract notions of the Absolute is that they do not give any explanation of the finite universe. To say that the Absolute is the external and accidental cause of the universe, is no answer. To dismiss the world as illusion only removes the difficulty a little farther, for the question still arises, What is the cause of this world illusion? Thus we see that if we stick fast to the intellectual level we have either a bare unity as in Sankara or a collection of separate elements as in Sankhya and the Yoga. But in no case is it possible for us to have a unity in diversity, an organic system in which the whole should be known through the distinction and relation of all the parts. We do not see the two, unity and diversity, as elements in a whole or factors in a unity. It is such a solution that is adopted by the Vedanta philosophers.

The distinction between self and not-self is not an irrational surd which cannot be eliminated, but is a distinction within a unity. In man there is a struggle between the higher and the lower, self and not-self (*Purusha* and *Prakriti*). He is an amphibious animal living in two worlds. Born of matter, entangled in it and oppressed by want and misery, he still has the divine spark which gives him a place in the spiritual realm of freedom. But the struggle between the divine and the human is bound to result in a complete triumph of the spirit and the consequent idealization of the material aspect. The self with its "ought" comes down on the not-self and, in spite of the refractory nature of the latter, transforms it. In morality we transform the actual and idealize it. Knowledge presupposes a unity between subject and object; without this basis knowledge is impossible. The very distinctions made by the intellect presuppose a unity which is not grasped by intellect. The interpretability of nature is proof posi-

tive of the kinship of object with subject, nature with mind. The antithesis between self and not-self is resolved in the Vedanta philosophy and the two are reconciled; "*Purusha* (the self) is the eater, *Prakriti* (not-self) is the food, and, abiding with it, he feeds" (Maitrayana Brahmana Upanishad, VI, Prapathaka 10). The not-self offers the conditions which are the material of self and the self instead of being the slave of the not-self is the highest and the most articulate expression of the not-self. Self and not-self do not run counter to each other. They are no rivals; rather do the two help each other in fulfilling the mission of the Divine. They are co-operating and not conflicting elements in the whole. We cut in two the whole and then view the environment as an alien influence checkmating the individual at every step of his progress. The individual is said to progress by fighting and conquering nature. We forget how nature could not be conquered by him if it were different from him in its essence. It is therefore a system of absolute idealism, however much we may try to disguise it by giving it other names that preserve to us the reality of the ideals and the unity of the pluralistic world. Even thinkers strongly inclined to pluralistic notions are compelled by sheer force of logic to embrace their pluralism in a higher idealism. Upton says: "It follows therefore that, though atoms and bodies appear to be isolated co-existences in space, this complete isolation and seeming independence of each other is only an appearance; for the reciprocal causality by which all these atoms and bodies are linked together inevitably forces us to the conclusion that deeper than the apparent spatial distance and division there is a metaphysical unity, or in other words that the self-subsistent creative ground of all finite existence does not wholly separate Himself from any one of the plurality of dependent energies or beings into which He differentiates himself; and therefore as every finite atom or

finite soul still remains, as regards a part of its nature, in indivisible union with its self-subsistent ground and source, the common relation to the self-subsistent one affords a true explanation of the metaphysical unity of the cosmos, and also of the possibility of reciprocal action of the monads of nature on each other, and of reciprocal action of the finite mind on nature and of nature on the mind. Thus the most recent science and philosophy appear to assert at once a real pluralism or individualism in the world of finite beings, but at the same time a deeper monism. The Eternal, who differentiates His own self-subsistent energy into the infinite variety of finite existences, is still immanent and living in every one of these different modes of being, and it is because all finite or created beings are only partially individual and still remain in vital union with their common ground, that it becomes possible for them through the medium of this common ground to act dynamically on each other; and it is for the same reason that those finite beings such as man, who have attained to self-consciousness, are able to enter into intellectual, moral, and spiritual relations, both with other rational finite minds and also with the eternal being with whom their own existence is in some measure indivisibly conjoined" (*Bases of Religious Belief*, pp. 12-13). The latest and the ablest exponent of pluralism, Dr. Ward, says: "Faith in God as the ground of the world affords us an assurance which we could not otherwise have, that complete harmony and unity, the good of all in the good of each is really attainable, nay will verily be attained. Whereas if we stop at a plurality of finite selves in interaction, we have no guarantee, cannot even reasonably expect that such a totality will ever attain to perfect organic unity" (*The Realm of Ends*, p. 447). Thus Ward and Upton, no friends of absolute idealism, are driven to admit the existence of an all-embracing unity as the ground of the world and recognize the finite selves

as differentiations thereof, though they try very hard to give the finite souls separate individualities.

The reality of the ideals of knowledge, art and morality has for its basis the highest unity which cannot be realized by *Vignana* (intellect) which revels in distinctions of self and not-self, subject and object, man and the universe, organism and environment. Our knowledge aspires to something more than knowledge, an intuitive grasp of the fundamental unity; our morality to something more than morality, viz., religion; our self to something more than personality, viz., God or the Absolute. Our knowledge is incapable of bringing us into contact with the whole. It aims at the unity, though the limitations of intellect forbid the attainment of the unity. The highest unity "from which all speech with the mind turns away, unable to reach it" (Taittiriya Upanishad, II, 4) cannot be grasped by the intellect.<sup>3</sup> The universe does not spell out its secret to man. It withholds from man the mystery which he strains to see. The human understanding can classify, relate and create out of given data, but it cannot say anything about the Absolute which is one without a second, and which is no object of the senses but constitutes the self of the whole world. The Kena Upanishad says: "It is other than the known and above the unknown." Simply because it is not open to knowledge we cannot say it is unreal. The illusions and contradictions of the intellect according to the Vedanta philosophies only exhibit the insufficiency of intellect to grasp the whole. They only show that there is a higher form of experience and that the spiritual life is not exhausted by the intellectual. To realize that there is the one all-encompassing reality including self and not-self, we have to proceed to the next higher stage. Finding the

<sup>3</sup> Kena Upanishad says: "The eye does not go thither, nor speech, nor mind. We do not know, we do not understand, how any one can teach it. It is different from the known, it is also above the unknown" (I, 3-4. See also I, 5-9).

finite intellect infected with duality, and realizing its inadequacy to represent the real, the son approaches the father, who asks him to persist in his inquiry. Bliss (or *Ananda*) reveals itself as the final explanation. "He perceived that *Ananda* is *Brahman*; for from *Ananda* these beings are born; by *Ananda* when born they live; into *Ananda* they enter at their death" (III, 6). We have direct experience of this bliss or delight in philosophic contemplation, artistic worship and religious devotion. In them we gain the ultimate peace beyond the unrest of life, attain the glorious harmony transcending all discords and grasp the unity of purpose which works through the apparent conflict of natural and social forces. The seer, the sage and the saint all enter into direct communion with the heart of things. Self and not-self are felt to be clasped in one in that stage. "All fears cease." Incidents of the earth cease to trouble the knower. The self has the consciousness that there is nothing else beside the Absolute. "One finds nothing else, knows nothing else, but the self." "All this is the self and the self alone" (Brihadavanyaka Upanishad, II, 4-6). So long as he sticks fast to the hard distinction between self and not-self, he has not reached the highest. It is said, "Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the infinite. Where one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else, that is the finite" (Chandogya Upanishad, VII, Prapathaka, 24th Khanda). The oneness of the universe cannot be characterized by anything else than bliss, joy or delight. "Seeing the self by the self, he is satisfied in his own self" (*Bhagavat Gita*, VI, 20). This highest experience is the heaven of Dante, free from darkness, confusion and antagonism. It is characterized by peace, perfection and tranquility. The aspirations of knowledge, love, morality, are here transformed into actualities. The unity of subject and object is no more an

ideal but we see it face to face. The oppositions of the finite consciousness are all reconciled. The son arrives at this stage and is no more troubled with doubts. His inquiry ceases. From *Ananda*, matter, life, consciousness and understanding are born, in *Ananda* they live and to *Ananda* they return. The harmony of man and the universe, *chit* (intelligence) and *sat* (reality) is realized. In that moment of divine vision described in the Bhagavat Gita the whole choir of heaven and furniture of earth was seen by Arjuna moving in the radiance of God. This religious or intellectual experience is the summit of the whole evolution. It is the crowning round of human life. It is the completion and the consecration of the whole struggle. It is "the light that never was on sea or land, the consecration, and the poet's dream." Here the philosopher's quest for reality in which thought can rest, terminates.

If self-consciousness is the distinctive mark of the intellectual experience, self-forgetfulness characterizes the *Ananda* (bliss) condition. It is the state where the self loses itself in the universe and by so losing finds its own realization. Peace and harmony we have; for the self offers itself up wholly and completely to the service of the Absolute. So long as we feel ourselves to have individualities of our own, we will be beset with conflict and contradiction, pain and pleasure, but when once we disinterestedly give ourselves up to the whole, there is an end of all discord. "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, in whatever austerity thou engagest, do it as an offering to me" (*Bhagavat Gita*, IX, 27). "Fix thy mind on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me. Thus steadied, with Me as thy Supreme Goal, thou shalt reach Myself the Self" (*Bhagavat Gita*, IX, 34). Only this complete renunciation of self and delivering up to the whole, will liberate

us from the pains of opposites (cf. *Bhagavat Gita*, IX, 28). The beautiful tradition that no man can see God and live, points to this truth that finite selfhood is incompatible with the life of the spirit. It shows how we cannot see God until we roll the stone of self away. The religious individual feels himself to be, not a selfish atom in the universe, but part of an order with a station to occupy and a function to fulfil in the economy of things. With his vision ever on the supreme, the religious soul approaches the facts of existence. He knows that the forces of the world cooperate with him in the realization of the highest. He lives above the plane of human experience, but still in it. He is the hero of the world who deserves worship at our hands.

It is not right to presume that intuition, by which we see the oneness of things, negates whatever intelligence posits. Intuition is really the soul of intelligence. The unity we will be able to grasp by means of intuitive insight, is the presupposition of all intellectual progress. Intuition is only the higher stage of intelligence, intelligence rid of its separatist and discursive tendencies. While it liberates us from the prejudices of the understanding, it carries our intellectual conclusions to a deeper synthesis. Instead of being an unnatural or a mysterious process it is a deeper experience which, by supplementing our narrow intellectual vision, amplifies it. Intuition is not an appeal to the subjective whims of the individual or a dogmatic faculty of conscience or the uncritical morbid views of a psychopath. It is the most complete experience we can possibly have. It is the experience devout souls have in moments of spiritual exaltation or religious devotion. Hegel, and after him Bradley, testify to the highest worth of this religious experience. Hegel says: "All the various peoples feel that it is in the religious consciousness they possess truth, and they have always regarded religion as constituting their true



dignity and the Sabbath of their lives. Whatever awakens in us doubt and fear, all sorrow, all care,—we leave behind on the shores of time; and as from the highest peak of a mountain, far away from all definite view of what is earthly, we look down calmly on all the temptations of the landscape and of the world, so with the spiritual eye man, lifted out of the hard realities of the actual world, contemplates it as something having only the semblance of existence, which, seen from this pure region bathed in the beams of the spiritual sun, merely reflects back its shades of color, its varied tints and lights, softened away into eternal rest" (*Philosophy of Religion*, English translation, Vol. I, p. 3). So Hegel. Bradley says: "We can see at once that there is nothing more real than what comes in religion. The man who demands a reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness, knows not what he seeks" (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 449). So when we talk of intuitional truths we are not getting into any void beyond experience. Intuitional experience is within the reach of all provided they strain themselves to it. These intuitional truths are not to be put down for chimeras simply because it is said that intellect is not adequate to grasp them. The whole, the Absolute, which is the highest concrete, is so rich that its wealth of content refuses to be forced into the fixed forms of the intellect. The life of the spirit is so overflowing that it bursts all barriers. It is vastly richer than human thought can compass. It breaks through every conceptual form and makes all intellectual determination impossible. The real is no more a pulseless identity excluding all differences; nor is it a chaotic disconnectedness with no order in it. It is the spiritual life, embracing the facts of nature which are shot through and through with the forms of mind. Philosophy is neither purely conceptualist nor merely empiricist but is intuitional. Art is the living expression of the soul which feels

itself to be in tune with the infinite. Morality is no more self-satisfaction or blind obedience to a set of categorical imperatives but is the life of a soul which feels its grip firmly on the spiritual destiny of the world. Philosophy, art and religion become different expressions of the one feeling of unity with the universe. This feeling of the essential oneness of the world-spirit failed the facts in the lower stages and made them lower, but now the identity is revealed and the Absolute is reached.

The relation of this Absolute *Ananda* to the other categories is one of higher to lower. The lower is included in the higher. The whole world is in *Ananda*, "The other beings live upon a small part of this *Ananda*." This joy is the reality or essence of the lower categories. "Life is the essence of food, mind of life, knowledge of mind, joy of knowledge" (*Maitryana Brahmana Upanishad*, VI, *Prapathaka*, 13). The highest and the most concrete category is *Ananda*. All the rest are imperfect revelations of it.<sup>4</sup> The whole variety of being rests in the Absolute and "is an evolution from that alone" (*Bhagavat Gita*, XIII, 30). The Chandogya Upanishad says: "From the Self is life, from the Self is desire, from the Self is love, from the Self is *Akasa*, from the Self is light, from the Self are waters, from the Self is manifestation and disappearance, from the Self is food" (VII, 26). Ultimately, life, mechanism, consciousness and intellect are parts of this comprehensive whole. They are all abstracts from it and the Absolute is the only *res completa*. It is the only individual. We cannot attribute a substantial existence to the individuals of sense. If we do so we remain, to use Spinoza's language, at the level of imagination without rising to the level of

<sup>4</sup> The categories cannot adequately bring out the nature of Brahman though they all rest in it. "That which is not expressed by speech and by which speech is expressed;...that which does not think by mind and by which, they say, mind is thought;...that which does not breathe by breath, and by which breath is drawn, that alone know as Brahman, not that which people here adore" (*Kena Upanishad*, I, 5, 6 and 9).

reason. The Absolute therefore is the whole, the only individual and the sum of all perfection. The differences are reconciled in it and not obliterated. The dead mechanism of stones, the unconscious life of plants, the conscious life of animals and the self-conscious life of men are all parts of the Absolute and its expression at different stages. The same Absolute reveals itself in all these. The ultimate reality sleeps in the stone, breathes in the plants, feels in the animals and awakes to self-consciousness in man. It progressively manifests itself in and through these particulars. The Absolute thus is an organized whole, with interrelated parts. It embraces time, its events and processes. The finite universe is rooted in the Absolute. Life, mechanism, etc., are all members together of one whole. The Absolute is not an abstract unit but a concrete whole binding together the differences which are subordinate to it. The whole has existence through the parts, and the parts are intelligible only through the whole.

On this view there cannot be any "creation." The question as to why the Absolute limited itself, why God became man, why the perfect became imperfect, is irrelevant. For there is no such thing as an infinite which first was an infinite and then transformed itself into finite. The infinite is finite. The Absolute is the self and its other. Gaudapada in his *Karikas* on the *Mandukya Upanishad* mentions the different theories of the creation of the universe. The universe may be the creation of an extra-cosmic God, or an illusion or the product of evolution. He dismissed these theories as incorrect, and declared that it is of the nature of God to express himself. It is the essence of spirit to manifest itself. The world is the affirmation of the Absolute. The universe is the energizing of God. God realizes himself in the world. We do not have the infinite and the finite, God and the world, but only the in-

finite as and in the finite, God as and in the world. The Supreme, the Eternal, is the unity of all things, finite and infinite. But when we consider the development of the Absolute, the distinction of self and not-self appears. The first existent or object in the Absolute is God, *Iswara* or the world-soul. He is the first-born lord of the universe, the creator of the world and its ruler. The Absolute breaks up its wholeness and develops the reality of self and not-self, *Iswara* and *Maya*, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. The self is God and the not-self the matter of the universe. This not-self is not a positive entity, as the Sankhya philosophers view it, but is only the reflection of the *Iswara*, the negative side of the affirmative. *Iswara*, or the personal God, is not the Absolute, but the highest manifestation of the Absolute. But even its highest manifestation is only a partial expression of it and not the whole.<sup>5</sup> The opposition of self and not-self, necessary for the universe, arises. The universe is due to the conjunction of *Maya* (not-self) with *Iswara* (self). "I know *Maya* as *Prakriti* (matter), him who is united with her as the great ruler (*Maheswara*). The whole world, in truth, is pervaded by his parts" (*Svetasvatara Upanishad*, IV, 10; cf. *Bhagavat Gita*, XII, 29). By the further differentiation of this original duality of self and not-self, *Iswara* and *Maya*, the whole universe arises. The world process is viewed as an eternal sacrifice, of which the one all-embracing reality is the victim (see *Catapatha Brahmana*, X, 2, 2, 1; III, 5, 3, 1; and XIII, 3, 1, 1).

We see now how the popular conception of the world as *Maya* or illusion is not right. *Brahmam*, the Absolute, is described in the Vedanta texts as an all-inclusive and not exclusive idea. It is the life of life, "the reality of reality" (*Brahadaranyaka Upanishad*, II, 1, 20). It is "existence,

<sup>5</sup> Sankara speaks of *Sri Krishna*, the fullest incarnation of God according to the Vedic religion, as *Amsena Sambhabhuva*, "born of a part."

intelligence and bliss.”<sup>6</sup> It is not a homogeneous unity but a harmony of different constituent elements. The Absolute is the fulfilment and completion of everything that is in the universe and not their extinction. It is the consecration of the lower forms of reality and not their destruction. The Vedanta Absolute is not the abstraction of an *être suprême* which avoids all differences but is a spirit that transcends and at the same time embraces all living beings. The *Maya* theory simply says that we are under an illusion if we think that the world of individuals, the pluralistic universe of the intellect, is the absolute reality. If in that way we make absolutely real what is only relatively real, we are bound in the chains of *Maya*.<sup>7</sup> Again, the Vedanta system cannot be considered pantheistic if by pantheism we mean an identification of the world with God. The Vedanta says nature or the world is only an expression of God. God is more than the world. The finite reveals the infinite but it is not the whole infinite. The Vedanta does not say that the human self-consciousness of the twentieth century is an adequate revelation of the absolute mind. The Absolute is more than man or for that matter the finite universe which includes man. “This whole world is sustained by one part of myself” (*Bhagavat Gita*, X, 42). “All beings form his foot” (*Taittiriya Aranyaka*, III, 12).

We will conclude this discussion with a few remarks on the place of imperfection and evil in the Vedanta philosophy. The whole universe has in it the impulse toward union with the Absolute. The pulse of the Absolute beats through the whole world, self and not-self. The world is an imperfect revelation of the Absolute striving to become perfect, or to reach harmony. The universe is the Absolute

<sup>6</sup> “He in whom the heaven, the earth and the sky are woven, the mind also with all the vital airs, know him alone as the Self” (*Mundaka Upanishad*, II, 2, 5) “that immortal Brahman is before, is behind, Brahman is to the right and the left” (*Ibid.*, II, 2, 11).

<sup>7</sup> See the writer’s paper on “The Doctrine of *Maya* in the Vedanta Philosophy” in the July number of the *International Journal of Ethics*, 1914.

dynamically viewed. If eternity is a circle, then the process of the universe may be viewed as a straight line. The universe of finite objects gives us a moving image of eternity, in the words of Plato. The eternal is viewed as a growth or a becoming or a working out. In the universe we have the self-evolution of the Absolute. The lower stages, which are imperfect as compared with the higher, strive to become perfect. The whole universe is a vast struggle to realize the unity which is the ideal. This tension of the universe is mirrored in man, reflected in his individuality. The Taittiriya Upanishad declares that man is a microcosm in which all parts of reality are represented on a reduced scale.<sup>8</sup> His nature reaches up to the Absolute and down to the plant and the animal. While confined to a material organism, the individual self has the capacity to rise beyond intelligence into immediate contact with the divine. To bring about the unity between the higher and the lower is the aim of the individual self as it is the aim of the universe. The individual self is the theater in which is enacted the drama of the universe, namely, the realization of a central identity in and by means of the differences of mechanism and life, consciousness and intellect. The impulse toward union and harmony is present in all finite objects. The finite strives to pass out of itself. All objects of the universe are thus double-natured. "Whatever being is born, the unmoving or the moving, know thou, O best of the Bharatas, that to be owing to the union of *Kshetra* and *Kshetragna*, 'matter and spirit, finite and infinite'" (*Bhagavat Gita*, XIII, 26). They are finite-infinite. The finiteness *qua* finiteness is a standing contradiction to the infiniteness. The presence of the infinite enables the individual to break the finite and proceed higher up. It is by

<sup>8</sup> In Chapter II it is said that the individual should not be identified with either the physical or the vital or the mental or the intellectual self. The essence of the individual's nature is to be found in the self of bliss which is the inmost self of all.

such a breaking of the shell of finiteness that the infinite self finds itself and develops. To gain the higher we must give up the lower. Unless our little self is sacrificed, progress is not possible. Every step on the upward path of realization means sacrifice of something else. This sacrifice, which means friction, opposition and pain, is the penalty we have to undergo in rising to our selves, on account of our finiteness. Throughout we have these incidents in the growth of a soul. Pain and suffering are phases of all progress. The process of the life of self is also a process of death. To have the fruit we must sacrifice the flower, though it is hard and painful to sacrifice it. Evil is thus organically related to the higher interests of man and is a necessary phase in the development of the individual self. Evil is therefore as real as the finite being is real. In this universe there is always development. We can never say "it is finished." The Absolute is never in history completely revealed. If so there will be no universe and no finiteness. As Schelling says, "God never is, if *is* means exhibition in the objective world; if God were, we should not be." Again, "The ultimate goal of the finite ego and not only of it but of the non-ego—the final goal therefore of the world—is its annihilation as a world." As Bradley says, "Fully to realize the existence of the Absolute is for finite beings impossible. In order thus to know we should have to be and then we should not exist." When we see Brahma we become Brahman. That is the verdict of the Vedanta philosophy. As finite we cannot see; when we see, we become infinite. In the finite universe there will ever be approximation to the goal of reaching the infinite and never realization. The Absolute in this world is half dream, half reality. The universe is only a partial revelation of the Absolute. Knowledge is an infinite progress; morality, a ceaseless growth. That is why the Vedanta philosophy considers this finite world to be a be-

ginningless and endless *Samsara*. We can never completely break the shell of egoism and attain the infinite if we remain in the finite universe, giving a substantial existence to our own individual self. The release from this world of trouble, risk and adventure can be had only by losing the separate self. Absolute surrender of self to God, a perfect identification with the divine will, will "let us pent-up creatures through into eternity, our due." The Swetswatara Upanishad says: "In this wheel of Brahman, which is the support as well as the end of all beings, which is infinite, roams about the pilgrim soul when it fancies itself and the supreme ruler different. It obtains immortality when it is upheld by him" (i. e., when the soul thinks itself to be one with him" (V, 6). If the soul does not gain this height of spiritual splendor when it loses itself in the all, it will find itself again and again taking births in the finite universe, as a separate self with all the results of the past *Karma* entering into its nature. It will revolve in the wheel of births and deaths until it reaches the highest, when it gives up all subjection to time.

Pain and suffering then are necessary incidents in the development of a human soul, which, as given, is a discord. Man is at a parting of the ways. There is a conflict between the different elements, the higher and the lower. Man is the completion or fulfilment of the lower and the anticipation of the higher. But growth means the death of the lower and the birth of the higher self, and so it will be accompanied by the agony of death and the travail of birth. We have moral evil and sin if the finite self assumes a false sufficiency and independence and adopts a more or less indifferent, if not a hostile, attitude to the universe at large. He is a sinner who, owing to imperfect understanding, takes up a false defiant attitude to the not-self. Intellectually this act is error and morally it is evil. If a man considers his supreme good to be in the satisfac-



tion of his appetites and the desires of the organism, he is a sinner. Selfishness is the root cause of sin. It is the opposition of the finite to the infinite, the rebellion of man against God. Evil is as necessary as any other finite element in the universe. A universe without it will be a universe where the finite is swallowed up in the infinite. A mere infinite without finite is an impossible conception. Therefore evil is a permanent factor in the universe.

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